

S P E E C H

OF THE

Right Hon. HENRY DUNDAS,

DELIVERED IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

The 15th of MARCH, 1796,

ON THE

FARTHER CONSIDERATION

OF THE

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE,

UPON THE

B I L L

FOR THE

Abolition of the Slave-Trade:

WITH A

COPY OF THE BILL, AND NOTES ILLUSTRATIVE

OF SOME PASSAGES IN THE SPEECH.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1796.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IN justice to the Right Honourable Gentleman, whose sentiments upon a most important question the following pages imperfectly record, it must be stated, that this Copy of his admirable Speech rests upon no higher authority than that of an attentive and faithful Reporter; and it has been judged more essential to the public information strictly to preserve the sense and chain of argument, than vainly to emulate a display of that grace and energy which distinguished the delivery of the original.

The

The few notes which have been added are principally intended to direct the reader to the most authentic sources of collateral information.

London,

28th April, 1796.

A BILL

A

B I L L

[AS AMENDED BY THE COMMITTEE]

FOR

The ABOLITION of the SLAVE-TRADE,

At a Time to be limited.

N. B. *The Clauses marked (A,) (B,) (C,) (D,) (E,) (F,) (G,) and (H,) were added by the Committee.*

WHEREAS the Slave-Trade is contrary to the Principles of Justice and Humanity:

May it therefore please Your MAJESTY,
That it be Enacted; And be it Enacted by the KING's Most Excellent MAJESTY, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same, That from and after

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the First Day of *March* One thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety-seven, it shall not be lawful to and for any Person or Persons whatever, to unship, land, import, or bring, or to cause or procure to be unshipped, landed, imported, or brought, into any of the Islands, Colonies, or Plantations, in the *West-Indies* or *America*, under the Dominion of His Majesty, His Heirs, or Successors, or to or for any *British* Subject or Subjects, to unship, land, import, or bring, or cause or procure to be unshipped, landed, imported, or brought, into any of the Islands or Dominions of any Foreign Sovereign or State, any Negroes, or other Slave or Slaves, from the Coast of *Africa*, or elsewhere, under Pain that every Person offending herein, or knowingly employing, aiding, abetting, assisting, counselling, hiring, or commanding, any Person or Persons to commit any such Offence, being thereof convicted by due Course of Law, shall be adjudged guilty of Felony, and shall and may be transported, for Fourteen Years, to *New South Wales*, or such other Place beyond the Seas, as His Majesty shall be pleased to direct and appoint, according to the Laws in force for the Transportation of Felons.

And

And be it further Enacted, That from and after the First Day of *January* One thousand Seven hundred and Ninety-seven, if any *British* Subject or Subjects shall export, transport, carry, or convey, or cause or procure to be exported, transported, carried, or conveyed, in any Ship or Vessel whatever, or shall ship or lade on Board, or shall cause or procure to be shipped or laden on Board any such Ship or Vessel, in order to be exported, transported, carried, or conveyed, any Negroes, or other Slave or Slaves, from *Africa* or elsewhere, or from on Board any other Ship or Vessel lying or being off the Coast of *Africa*, or at Sea, to any of the Islands, Dominions, or Territories, of any Foreign Sovereign or State, every such *British* Subject offending herein, or otherwise knowingly aiding, abetting, employing, assisting, counselling, hiring, or commanding, any Person or Persons to commit any such Offence as last-mentioned, being thereof convicted by due Course of Law, shall be adjudged guilty of Felony, and shall and may be transported, for Fourteen Years, to *New South Wales*, or such other Place beyond the Seas as His Majesty shall be pleased to direct and appoint, according to the Laws in force for the Trans-

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portation of Felons: Provided, nevertheless, that nothing herein contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to prohibit the importing or bringing from any of the said Islands, Colonies, or Plantations, under the Dominion of His Majesty in the *West-Indies*, to any other of the said Islands, Colonies, or Plantations, any Negro, or other Slave or Slaves, that shall, prior to the said First Day of *March* One thousand Seven hundred and Ninety-seven, have been truly and without Fraud imported into any of the said Islands, Colonies, or Plantations, or any Negro or other Slave or Slaves, born in any of the said Islands, Colonies, or Plantations.

And be it further Enacted, That every Ship or Vessel, Sloop, Schooner, Boat, or other Vessel, in or on Board which any *African* Negro or Negroes, or other Slave or Slaves, shall be imported, conveyed, or brought, into any of the Islands, Colonies, or Plantations, under the Dominion of His Majesty, His Heirs or Successors, or into any of the Islands, Dominions, or Territories, of any Foreign Sovereign or State, or shall be exported, transported, carried, or conveyed, or shall be shipped or laden in order to be exported, transported,

ported, carried, or conveyed, contrary to the Provisions of this Act, together with all her Guns, Furniture, Ammunition, Tackle, and Apparel, and all Slaves, Goods, and Effects, found on Board shall be forfeited, and prosecuted as herein-after mentioned, and shall and may be seized by any Officer of the Customs or of His Majesty's Navy.

CLAUSE (A.)

And be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That all and every the Ships, Vessels, and Boats, Slaves, Goods, and Effects, liable to be forfeited by Virtue of this Act, shall and may be seized by the Commander or Commanders of any of His Majesty's Ships or Vessels of War, or any Commissioned, War-rant, or Petty, Officer, specially authorized by him or them, or by any Officer or Officers of His Majesty's Customs; and that every Forfeiture of any Ships, Vessels, Boats, Slaves, Goods, and Effects, incurred by this Act, shall and may respectively be sued for, prosecuted, and recovered, in such Courts, and by such and the like Ways, Means, and Methods, and the Produce thereof respectively disposed of and applied in such and the like Manner, and to such and the like Uses and Purposes,

as any Forfeiture incurred by an Act passed in the Fourth Year of His present Majesty's Reign, intituled, "An Act for granting certain Duties in the *British Colonies and Plantations in America*; for continuing, amending, and making perpetual, an Act passed in the Sixth Year of the Reign of his late Majesty King George the Second, intituled, "*An Act for the better securing and encouraging the Trade of His Majesty's Sugar-Colonies in America*; for applying the Produce of such Duties, and of the Duties to arise by Virtue of the said Act, towards defraying the Expenses of defending, protecting, and securing, the said Colonies and Plantations; for explaining an Act made in the Twenty-fifth Year of the Reign of King Charles the Second, intituled, "*An Act for the Encouragement of the Greenland and Eastland Trades, and for the better securing the Plantation-Trade*; and for altering and disallowing several Drawbacks on Exports from this Kingdom, and more effectually preventing the clandestine Conveyance of Goods to and from the said Colonies and Plantations; and improving and securing the Trade between the same and *Great-Britain*," can or may now be sued for, prosecuted, and recovered,

covered, disposed of, and applied either in this Kingdom, or in any of His Majesty's Islands, Plantations, and Dominions, in the *West-Indies*, *America*, or elsewhere, respectively, as the Case may happen to be.

CLAUSE (B.)

And be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That upon every Suit and Prosecution for the Forfeiture of any Ship, Vessel, or Boat, Slaves, Goods, or Effects, which shall be seized and prosecuted for the importing or bringing, exporting, transporting, carrying, or conveying, shipping, or lading, any Negro or Negroes, Slave or Slaves, the *onus probandi*, that such Negro or Negroes, Slave or Slaves, was or were truly and without Fraud imported into some Island, Colony, or Plantation, under the Dominion of His Majesty in the *West-Indies*, prior to the said First Day of *March* in the Year One thousand Seven hundred and Ninety-seven, or was or were born in some such Island, Colony, or Plantation, or was or were brought in for the Purpose of being prosecuted as forfeited, pursuant to the Provisions of this Act, shall lie on the Claimant or Owner, Claimants or Owners, of the Property under Prosecution; and if he or they shall refuse or

omit to make full and clear Proof thereof, such Negro or Negroes, Slave or Slaves, shall, for the Purposes of the said Suit or Prosecution, be deemed and taken to have been transported from *Africa* after the said First Day of *January* One thousand Seven hundred and Ninety-seven, contrary to the Provisions of this Act,

CLAUSE (C.)

And be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, that all Negroes and other Slaves that shall become forfeited, and shall be duly adjudged to be forfeited by force of this Act, shall and may, after such Abjudication, be lawfully imported into any of the said Islands, Colonies, or Plantations, under the Dominion of His Majesty in the *West-Indies*, and there sold and disposed of in Manner herein-after directed, any Thing herein contained to the contrary thereof notwithstanding; but no Sale of any such forfeited Negroes or Slaves shall be made, nor shall the same be imported into any of the said Islands, Colonies, or Plantations, (except for the Purpose of being there prosecuted by the Party or Parties who shall seize the same,) without first producing to the Collector or other principal Officer of the Customs

Customs of the Port or Place in which the same shall be so sold or imported, a true Copy of the Judgement or Sentence whereby the same shall have been adjudged to be forfeited, certified under the Seal of the Court; in which Judgement or Sentence, the Number, Sex, and other convenient Descriptions, of the said Negroes or Slaves, shall be specified; nor shall any Sale of such forfeited Negroes or Slaves be made but by such Collector or other principal Officer of the Customs, or some other Person or Persons by him for that Purpose appointed; and such Collector or principal Officer shall receive the Monies to arise from the Sale thereof, and within Three Months after any and every such Sale, transmit an Account of the same to the Commissioners of His Majesty's Customs in *London*, and shall pay and apply the Monies arising therefrom in Manner next herein-after mentioned; (that is to say,) the said Collector or principal Officer may retain thereout, for his own Use, a Commission of Five Pounds in the Hundred upon the Net Proceeds of such Sale or Sales; and shall thereout pay and defray all Costs and Charges of the Prosecution of the said forfeited Negroes or other Slaves, and also of the Prosecution of any Persons or Persons by whose Act such

such

such Forfeiture was incurred; and as to the Residue of the said Monies, the said Collector or other principal Officer shall pay the same to His Majesty's Use, and to or to the Use of the Party or Parties who seized and prosecuted the said Negroes or other Slaves, or to the Use of His Majesty, the said Party or Parties, and the Governor of the Island, Colony, or Plantation, wherein the Forfeiture was incurred, as the Case may happen to be, according to the Provisions of the said recited Act made in the Fourth Year of His Majesty's Reign: Provided always, that if the Party or Parties seized and prosecuted as aforesaid shall prosecute and bring to Conviction any Person or Persons, by whose Offence or Offences against this Act the Forfeiture of such Negroes or other Slaves shall have been incurred, and the said Collector or other Officer shall be certified thereof, by producing to him the Record of the Conviction of such Offender or Offenders, or some attested Copy thereof; then the said Party or Parties, so seizing and prosecuting, shall be entitled to receive, and shall receive, to his or their own Use, not only the Share of the said Monies which he or they shall be entitled to by the Provisions of the said recited Act, but also the Share thereof which would have

have otherwise belonged to His Majesty; any Thing in the said recited Act or herein contained to the contrary thereof notwithstanding.

CLAUSE (D.)

And be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, that all Offences made Felonies by this Act, which shall be committed in *Africa*, or elsewhere beyond the Seas, or upon the High Seas, shall and may be inquired of, indicted, tried, and adjudged, in His Majesty's Court of King's Bench, in like Manner, to all Intents and Purposes, as if the Offence had been committed in the County of *Middlesex*, or in any other County of that Part of *Great-Britain* called *England*, where the Court of King's Bench shall sit; or else before such Commissioners, and in such County in that Part of *Great-Britain* called *England*, as shall be assigned by the King's Commission, in like Manner and Form, to all Intents and Purposes, as if such Offence had been committed in the same County, where the same shall be so inquired of, indicted, tried, determined, and adjudged.

CLAUSE

CLAUSE (E.)

And be it further Enacted, That if any Person or Persons shall be taken and apprehended in *Africa*, or elsewhere beyond the Seas, or on the High Seas, in the Act of carrying, transporting, exporting, or lading, on Board any Ship, Boat, or other Vessel, or of importing any Negro or Negroes, Slave or Slaves, contrary to the Provisions of this Act, it shall and may be lawful to and for the Commander or Commanders of any of His Majesty's Ships or Vessels of War, or other Person or Persons apprehending such Offender or Offenders, to detain him or them, and to send him or them in safe Custody to *England*, there to be proceeded against and tried as aforesaid,

CLAUSE (F.)

Provided always, and be it Enacted, That if any Person or Persons so apprehended shall first be brought to any Island or Place under the Dominion of His Majesty, out of *Europe*, he or they shall be carried before the Governor, or Lieutenant-Governor, or other Person having the chief Civil Command under His Majesty in such Island or Place, who shall hear the

the Evidence touching the Offence alledged to have been committed against this Act, and examine the Party or Parties accused; and if it shall appear to such Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, or other Commander in Chief, that the said Party or Parties accused have or has in Fact committed any Offence made Felony by this Act, either in *Africa*, or elsewhere, beyond the Seas, or on the High Seas, or that there is just Cause to put him or them on Trial for such Offence, then such Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, or Commander in Chief, shall, and he is hereby required to order and cause such Party or Parties accused, to be sent under sufficient Custody to *England*, there to be proceeded against and tried as aforesaid; and such Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, or Commander in Chief, shall, and he is hereby authorized and required to bind in Recognizances to His Majesty all such Witnesses as the Prosecutor, or the Party or Parties accused, shall desire to attend, to give Evidence on any Indictment to be preferred for the alledged Offence, or on the Trial thereof, for their Personal Appearance at the Time and Place of preferring such Indictment, or of such Trial, to give Evidence thereon respectively; and the said Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, or Commander

mander in Chief, shall thereupon appoint a reasonable Sum to be allowed for the Expenses of every such Witness, and shall give to every such Witness a Certificate under his Hand and Seal that such Witness has entered into such Recognizance to give Evidence, and specifying the Sum allowed for his Expenses; and the Collector or Collectors of the Customs at such Island or Place, upon the Delivery of such Certificate, are and is hereby authorized and required forthwith to pay to such Witness the Sum specified therein for his Expenses.

CLAUSE (G.)

And be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That if any Person, offending against this Act, shall discover any other Person or Persons who shall have offended against this Act within Two Years preceding the Time of such Discovery, so that such Person or Persons so discovered be thereupon convicted, such Person so discovering, and not having been before that Time convicted of any Offence against this Act, shall be indemnified and discharged from all Penalties he shall then have incurred by any Offence against this Act.

CLAUSE

CLAUSE (H.)

And be it further Enacted by the Authority
aforesaid, That if any Action, Suit, or Prosecution, shall be commenced, either in *Great-Britain*, the *West-Indies*, or *America*, against any Person or Persons, for any Seizure made, or any other Matter or Thing done in pursuance of this Act, the Defendant or Defendants in such Action or Suit may plead the General Issue, and give this Act and the special Matter in Evidence at any Trial to be had thereupon, and that the Matter in Question was done in Pursuance and by Authority of this Act; and if it shall appear to have been so done, the Jury shall find for the Defendant or Defendants; and if the Plaintiff or Plaintiffs shall be non-suited, or discontinue his or their Action after the Defendant or Defendants shall have appeared, or if Judgement shall be given upon any Verdict or Demurrer against the Plaintiff or Plaintiffs, the Defendant or Defendants shall recover Treble Costs, and have the like Remedy for the same, as Defendants have in other Cases by Law.

SPEECH

Case (11)

And as it further Enacted in the Statute
That if any Action, Suit or Pro-
ceeding shall be commenced, either in Court
or before the Justices of the Peace, against
any other Person or Thing, than is herein
before of this Act, the Defendant or Defendants
shall, before or after they shall the Court
have, and give to the Plaintiff the special Plea
in Evidence to any Trial to be had thereupon,
and that the Matter in Question was not in
Evidence and by Authority of this Act, and
it shall appear to have been so done, the
Court shall, for the Plaintiff or Plaintiffs
Benefit, set aside the Plea or Pleas, and shall
be non-est, or discontinuance, or that the
Defendant or Defendants shall
have appeared, and Judgment shall be given
upon any Verdict or Judgment against the
Plaintiff or Plaintiffs, the Defendant or De-
fendants shall recover a triple Cost, and shall
the the Recovery for the same, as Defendants
have in other Cases by Law.

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S P E E C H

OF THE

Right Hon. HENRY DUNDAS.

I CAME down this day, not without great personal inconvenience, to deliver my thoughts on the measure now under consideration; which I conceive to be one of the most important that has for a long time engaged the attention of this House. An Honourable Gentleman* has declared it to be an argument in favour of the present Bill, that it is supported by all those who are most distinguished for eloquence, wisdom, and personal authority, amongst us. Acknowledging, Sir, with due humility, this assertion to be just, I hope, that those qualifications, and that superiority which the supporters of this Bill possess, will suggest to them the propriety of attending with moderation, with forbearance, and even with

* Mr. Montague,

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some degree of complacency and condescension, to the objections of other Gentlemen, who have, all along, doubted and hesitated respecting the wisdom of the measure; and whose doubts have now amounted to a decided conviction, that the Bill proposed, if passed into a law in its present shape, will tend to obstruct its own object; and will, at the same time, endanger the most important interests of this country and her colonies.

Sir, I profess myself to be one of those who look upon the Bill to be thus dangerous and impolitic; and, be my talents great or small, I think it my duty to oppose a measure which I consider as tending to no possible good; but which, on the contrary, will, in my judgement, be productive of the most mischievous consequences. As I claim a patient attention from the Gentlemen with whom I differ on this occasion, let me, on the other hand, declare, that many of them are men, of whose talents, integrity, and good intentions, I entertain the most exalted opinion. I know that the motives of their conduct are pure, just, and benevolent; and seeing the subject in so different a point of view from those Gentlemen, I must naturally feel great diffidence of the soundness of

of my own judgement in such a case. That diffidence has led me to revolve the question in my mind over and over again, and the more I have considered it, the more I am convinced *that I am in the right*; — but, with such weight of authority and ability against me, I feel it impossible to avow that conviction, without submitting my reasons to the consideration of the House.

Sir, I agree that there never was a subject which had the advantage of being more completely canvassed, more deeply probed, and sounded to the bottom. It has been investigated by every species of inquiry, and illustrated by evidence and information of all kinds, and therefore it is scarcely possible, after a discussion of seven years, that I can offer any thing new upon it at this time of day. I have no such expectation: all that I pretend to is, to state, from acknowledged facts and allowed premises, those principles and conclusions which influence my own mind; and which, if attentively considered by this House, cannot fail, I think, to make Gentlemen pause before they rashly urge forward a measure, of the consequences of which, I am persuaded, they are not fully apprized.

Sir, there are two propositions which I originally laid down, and which I wish to re-state, as the foundation of all the opinions that I now entertain upon this subject. The first is, that even admitting, with the Gentlemen who support this Bill, the Slave-Trade to be contrary to the principles of justice and humanity, still the *mode* proposed by them of suppressing it must directly frustrate their own views. The second is, that, without obtaining the co-operation of the planters and the colonial assemblies of the West-Indies, all endeavours whatever to abolish this trade will be abortive and ineffectual. I repeat the assertion. I say, that, without the concurrence and co-operation of the colonies, all our endeavours to abolish the Slave-Trade will only serve to increase it, under the encouragement of other nations. Sir, I readily anticipate the reply which will be made. It has been asked, and it will be asked again, "Are we to suffer robbery and murder to pass unpunished among ourselves, because other nations may allow those crimes to be committed with impunity?" Surely, Sir, this is not a case in point; it is no answer to the observation. For, when Gentlemen speak of the abolition

abolition of the Slave-Trade *as a question in which the interests of humanity are concerned*, it is material to consider, what in such case will be the conduct of other nations? Gentlemen may say "Let us first remove the pollution from ourselves." But can any man affirm, that, if Great-Britain shall abandon the Slave-Trade, it will *not* be carried on to at least an equal degree, and, perhaps, with greater hardships to the negroes, by foreign states; and with all the accumulated benefits of an exclusive traffic? If this shall be the fact,—if other countries shall take up what we surrender,—let me not be told, that the interests of humanity will be promoted by the Bill now before the House. It has, indeed, been intimated, that the example of England may go far in producing an abolition in foreign countries also. America and other nations have been named,* but

* Although the importation of negroes into America be generally discontinued, and that the supply of foreign colonies with slaves be prohibited by law, yet from the concurring inducements of her own advantages over the belligerent powers of Europe, and the emoluments of a trade with the Spanish islands, the Americans do at present carry on, to a considerable extent, from the ports of Charleston, Norfolk, Newbury, and Rhode-Island, (by means of coarse India goods imported, and rum manufactured by themselves,) a

but I assert, in strong and positive terms, that, if the Trade be carried on by Spain, Portugal, Denmark, or any other nation, to any extent, the attempts of this country to abolish it will prove nugatory.

With regard to the *right* of Great-Britain, in this case, over the trade of her colonies, it is a matter into which I do not wish to enter. It is a question of much delicacy; for I do not know in what part of the statute-book the nature and extent of the superintending power of Great-Britain is accurately defined. I will just hint for the consideration of the House, that it is material to consider how far it is prudent and politic to bring forward any measures which may provoke a discussion on that head. I say, Sir, I could wish Gentlemen would consider whether this Bill will not induce a question that ought not to be agitated? There are, undoubtedly, certain general principles in the connexion between the colonies

trade to Africa for slaves, with which they supply the Spaniards at Cuba, and receive in payment partly specie, and partly molasses for their distilleries. Even the lethargic Spaniard seems to be awakened to the important benefits of the sugar-trade, and the island of Cuba is making rapid advances in the cultivation of that article.

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and the mother-country, which are too obvious to be disputed. Thus it is admitted, that the colonies are entitled to protection from the mother-country, and to that support, assistance, and encouragement, which are necessary for their existence, preservation, and welfare. On the other hand, the colonies are compelled to bring their produce to the mother-country, and to take her exports in return, and they are restricted from resorting to any other market, or receiving assistance from any other power. All these are clear, simple, and undisputed, principles of colonial intercourse with the parent-state. They are reciprocal obligations.*

But

* In this sketch of the reciprocal obligations of the British colonial system, it is observable, that no notice is taken of that exclusive possession of the home-market, which, in return for the entire monopoly of their trade, the colonies lay claim to, and have, with some few exceptions, hitherto enjoyed. This claim was ably stated in the year 1781 by Mr. Fox; when an attempt was made, by the sugar-refiners, to obtain from Parliament an Act allowing the introduction of foreign sugars into home-consumption. In reply to Lord Beauchamp, Mr. Fox observed, "that the noble Lord had called
" the non-importation of prize-sugars a mere custom-house
" regulation, and therefore thought the rule might easily be
" dispensed with; but he must inform his Lordship, that a
" compact more solemn than any Act of Parliament could
" create made that rule not to be infringed; for we had mo-

But if the present Bill should pass into a law, if, by an abrupt decision on this question, you shall endeavour to deprive your colonies of those means of cultivation, which they consider, *and which this country has repeatedly acknowledged to be*, essential to their prosperity and preservation; an important question will,

“ nopolized the produce of our plantations by unnatural re-
 “ strictions on their trade; this was the only country in
 “ Europe in which they were permitted, by our laws, to sell
 “ their crops. Surely, then, by every principle of reason
 “ and natural justice, they should also have an exclusive ac-
 “ cess to our markets, a monopoly subsisting on one side
 “ necessarily implying a monopoly also on the other. There
 “ was not any written agreement, but there was something
 “ more substantial, there was monopoly against monopoly.
 “ The West-India planters were confined in the sale of their
 “ commodities to Britain, and Britain was confined to take
 “ those commodities from them, and them only. This tacit
 “ bargain was confirmed not by words, but by deeds; the
 “ planters enjoyed certain privileges, and for those privileges
 “ they gave something in return, an ample equivalent, so
 “ that there was *quid pro quo*, which was allowed in the civil
 “ law to be a formal ratification of any compact or bar-
 “ gain.” See Debrett’s Par. Reg. vol. iii. p. 420. But
 Mr. Edwards, the enlightened historian of the colonies, has
 stated at large and fully explained the reciprocal bearings of
 the compact between the mother-country and the West-
 India colonies, in vol. ii. book 6th, cap. 5, of his History of
 the West-Indies. See also, The Legal Claim of the British
 Sugar-Colonies, &c. affixed to Remarks on the New Sugar-
 Bill, &c. printed for Johnson, 1792.

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for the first time, offer itself to your consideration. I say, Sir, if you not only refuse to supply them, *but deny to them the privilege of supplying themselves, by any means*, with negroes from Africa, which the acts of this country have declared to be necessary for their profitable existence,* a question concerning the limits of protection and obedience will arise, which has never been brought into controversy between Great-Britain and her islands. I am sorry to be obliged to press these observations; they involve a subject of great delicacy; but, unless we are, upon this occasion, to lay aside every consideration of policy, as some Gentlemen have thought proper to assert, I cannot but think *this* question proper for the discussion of a British House of Commons, before we proceed any farther in the business before you. Sir, it is not so easy to settle this point as Gentlemen may imagine. The abolition of the Slave-Trade is full of difficulty and danger; but, putting aside the question *of right*, I re-

* The preamble of the Act of 23d George II. cap. 31, (adopting the terms of antecedent resolutions of parliament,) runs thus: Whereas the trade *to and from* Africa is very advantageous to Great-Britain, and *necessary* for the supplying the plantations and colonies thereunto belonging with a sufficient number of negroes at reasonable rates.

peat, that, without the concurrence of the colonies, it is not *in the power* of Great-Britain to enforce the measure. "What!" (I hear Gentlemen exclaim,) "is it not in the power of Great-Britain, with her numerous and formidable fleets, to prevent the colonies from trading with Africa? Where is the man that will maintain so absurd a proposition?" I, Sir, am that man: I insist, that, if through the medium of any foreign island, if by the assistance of any nation possessing colonies in the West-Indies, the planters are desirous of a supply of negroes from Africa, it will be impossible for any force you can send to prevent them from finding a landing-place. I wish, Sir, that any naval officer in this House would rise up in his place, and pledge his character, that we can prevent the smuggling of negroes into our islands; I am convinced it is physically impossible; and I will state to the House the grounds of my conviction. In the course of the last summer, with twenty-eight ships of war appropriated to the purpose of preventing frequent communications of the French with two of our West-India islands, it was found impracticable to suppress those communications which were not kept up in the night, merely by means of canoes, or boats and barges; whence

whence a landing of negroes would be more easily accomplished, but in an avowed and open manner, against which precaution might be taken, and of which information could be readily obtained; but, in the smuggling-trade, in which it is easy to put negroes a-shore in small craft, under cover of the night, choosing the hour and minute of acting, it would be impossible to prevent the planters from being supplied to their wishes with fresh slaves, which, the moment they are landed, are out of the reach of our laws. I am sorry to be obliged to make this frank statement, and it is with heart-felt regret I avow, that we have not had it in our power, with so many ships of war, to defeat the designs of the enemy; but I ground my assertion upon the authority of the most able seamen, who have represented to me, that I was too sanguine in my hopes on that head. If I am, therefore, right in this statement, your act of parliament may be what it will; but you never can destroy the Slave-Trade, contrary to the wishes, the interest, and the consent, of your colonies.

There is, Sir, *one* ingredient which the framers of this Bill have wholly omitted and overlooked, but which would probably have made

made the Bill not quite so unpalatable, as it is at present, to the planters. The ingredient I mean is a small degree of *moderation*. I think it were easy to have made it *the interest* of the planters not to combat your act of parliament. But this idea, which so forcibly presents itself to me, has no weight with the Gentlemen who support this plan of abolition; and yet I sincerely wish they would consider whether they might not best promote, and soonest obtain, the avowed ultimate object of their wishes by gentle and gradual means, which, though slow in their operation, would be sure in their effect. I allude to the adoption of measures calculated to obtain the co-operation of the planters, rather than to attack them with the high hand of headstrong authority, shewing that we despise their interference, and disclaim their concurrence. I entreat Gentlemen would for a moment reflect, whether it is not worth their while, even for the sake of that humanity which they so nobly defend, to take into their view the propriety of blending conciliation with their provisions, and of paying some little regard to the interests, and even to the prejudices, of the colonists. But, Sir, I cannot discern in the whole course of this business a single circumstance which does not tend to alienate

alienate the affections of the planters, and engage them in one common cause against the present Bill and its promoters.

I am unwilling to refer back to discussions which have taken place within or without these doors; but it is impossible to forget the many outrageous calumnies and foul aspersions, which, for years past, have been promulgated against the planters. They have been represented as savages destitute of those feelings which adorn humanity; as beings whose hearts were steeled against the impressions of sympathy and compassion. These misrepresentations have been made by persons, who, finding solitary insulated instances of cruelty in the West-Indies, (as are to be found in every country under the sun,) have been willing to make those the foundation of a general charge against the whole collective body of planters. I beg, Sir, that I may not be misunderstood. I do not accuse Gentlemen in this House of such dishonourable conduct; but I do accuse their agents, and persons acting under them, who have taken every opportunity, by the basest exaggeration and falsehood, of calumniating the planters, and exciting against them the indignation of the public mind.

mind. The prevailing sentiment, the great object, has seemed to be, not to consider how best to promote the interests of the islands, not to contrive how to secure the rights of property, — but in what manner to load most effectually the ill-fated proprietors with every species of obloquy. What has been the consequence? The planters, united in a just and general feeling, as well for the preservation of character as of property, have been roused to a man; and been determined to oppose every attempt to alter their system of cultivation. It was, Sir, the general attack upon their good name which produced so firm an union, more strong and durable than you would have encountered had you attacked their property alone. I think both in policy and humanity, that a little attention should have been paid to secure the dutiful and loyal acquiescence of men, who have hitherto had the aggravated misfortune of contending for their property with the certainty of seeing their characters unjustly torn to pieces in the struggle.

It is not, Sir, my intention to enter into the various regulations (rigorous as many of them undoubtedly are) which this Bill proposes. I do not wish to cavil with the Honourable

nourable Gentleman* respecting the particular provisions, which he may think necessary for carrying his measure into effect, yet I cannot help making a few observations on two of the clauses. By one of them, the planters have the power of transporting slaves from one island to another, as they shall think proper. I should have much doubted the policy of such a measure, if I were even convinced of its justice. But, Sir, this clause is altogether repugnant to the principle of the Bill. I have even looked upon it as one of the most rigorous parts of the system of slavery, that, after a negro has been domesticated in any one island, after he has formed an attachment to a particular spot, to a gentle task-master, to a friend, perhaps to a wife and children, (attachments probably of a more tender nature than those from which he was originally torn,) he should be sent to incur the miseries of a new slavery in another island, destitute of family and friends, and forced, as it were, to recommence life in old age, and form new connexions, from which, he must be conscious, he may again be as suddenly hurried into a similar or a worse state of wretchedness. Yet

* Mr. Wilberforce,

this,

this, Sir, is one of the provisions of the present Bill!

Let me now call your attention to the other clause; — a clause for which I am utterly at a loss to account, consistently with the principles of humanity professed by its supporters. It is the clause which regulates the disposal of smuggled slaves taken in ships at sea. We are constantly told that African negroes, sold into slavery, are torn from the protection of their parents, from the bosoms of their wives, and from the cries of their parting infants, by men guilty of injustice, robbery, and murder. Admitting this to be the case, I ask, Sir, what reparation are these poor wretches to receive, when they fall into the humane hands of men acting under this new act of parliament? One would have thought their sorrows were to be mitigated, their sufferings to be alleviated, and their wrongs redressed! I ask again, what is the indemnification or reparation held out to these miserable captives for such accumulated injuries? What is the redress proposed by those who are tremblingly alive to their misfortunes? Will it be believed, Sir, that these very negroes are, by this Bill, still to be sold as slaves in our islands, and that, of the money

money arising by the sale, one-third goes to the King, one to the Governor of the colony, and the remainder to the informer or captor! The proceeds of the capture are to be divided as the proceeds of brandy or any other merchantable commodity would be divided in a like case, and distributed in shares. Thus, in the hurry of reformation, Gentlemen have admitted provisions which are full as inconsistent with humanity and justice as any branch of the Trade which they mean to abolish!

Sir, my objections are to the Bill as it now stands. I will admit, for argument-sake, that the African Slave-Trade is irreconcilable to justice; and I confess, that many circumstances concur which incline me to that opinion. I do not, therefore, object to the principle of the Bill, nor do I combat the position, that it is expedient and just to put an end to the African Slave-Trade, *provided it be done with the least possible injury to those, who, under our encouragement, have embarked their fortunes in it.* I perfectly agree with that principle. But it is there, Sir, that I pause. For when, from the question *of right*, I come to the question of *means and ability to execute and enforce*, I am confident, that it is not in the power of

the parliament of Great-Britain to carry the abolition into effect, without the consent of the planters. No law which we could pass would prevent the importation of slaves from Africa into the colonies, particularly if they should be previously landed on any foreign island. I have informed myself much upon that point, and I am at this moment better informed than I ever was before. My opinion is derived from experience. I know, as I have already stated, that twenty-eight ships of war were not sufficient to cover two islands from the French; nor did they land from small tenders or brigs, carrying twenty or thirty men each, but from large vessels, more easy to be discovered, and more liable to be confiscated. If this statement be just, the only practical conclusion which I wish to draw is, that the House should consider, whether they will be able to carry the purposes of the Bill into effect, without colonial co-operation. If they cannot do this, let me recommend the adoption of some provisions to shew, that, whilst we study the interests of the Africans, we, at the same time, attend to the rights and interests of those, who are, by their connexion with the parent-state, entitled to our protection;—who, in return for their loyalty and allegiance, claim

claim from us the security of their plantations and produce.

Sir, the arguments of an Honourable General,* who opposed this measure, have not been fairly answered. The answer that was given arose from a perversion of the object of his argument, which went to a fair consideration of the subject. The Honourable General stated, that the African Trade was instituted, encouraged, and supported, under the sanction of parliament. He was answered, that we should not persist in an abuse, because it had been sanctioned by our ancestors. Let me state this matter fully, in furtherance of the Honourable General's arguments. The British parliament has, for more than a century, encouraged this Trade, — for what was originally done by our ancestors, if not regulated by late positive acts, has been continued by the tacit acquiescence of parliament. The subjects of this country, who are the creditors of the planters, I mean our monied men, have been urged and stimulated by the legislature to support that Trade which we are now called upon to abolish. It would be endless to recite

* General Smith.

the various acts of parliament which have passed for the regulation and encouragement of this Trade; — some for the culture of plantations; some for the establishment of exclusive companies, for the purpose of trading with the coast of Africa, and importing negroes for the cultivation of West-India plantations; and others for encouraging foreigners as well as British subjects to lend their money for the improvement of the colonies.*

Now,

* The following summary of the principal acts and declarations of the legislature, to which Mr. Dundas here alludes, is, in a great measure, extracted from the minutes of evidence against the abolition of the Slave-Trade, taken 20th March, 1790, by the Select Committee of the House of Commons. Some omissions are, however, supplied,

1st. Acts and declarations which state the West-India colonies and the trade thereof to be very advantageous to Great-Britain, and therefore entitled to her protection and encouragement.

15 C. II. cap. 7.
22 and 23 C. II. cap. 26.
7 and 8 W. III. cap. 22.
3 and 4 Anne, cap. 7-10.
6 Anne. See the Queen's
Message to the Commons, re-
specting Nevis and St. Kitt's.
6 Anne, cap. 30.

6 Anne, cap. 37.
8 Anne, cap. 13.
4 Geo. II. cap. 15.
5 Geo. II. cap. 24.
6 Geo. II. cap. 13.
Subsequently continued.
11, 19, 26, 29, and 31,
Geo. II.

Continued

Now, Sir, though I do not claim, as a support to my weak arguments, that they are

Continued farther, amended, and made perpetual, 4 Geo. III. cap. 15.	21 Geo. II. cap. 30.
12 Geo. II. cap. 30.	5 Geo. III. cap. 45.
19 Geo. II. cap. 30.	6 Geo. III. cap. 52.
	27 Geo. III. cap. 27.

2dly. Acts and declarations which authorise, protect, and encourage, the Trade to Africa for Slaves as advantageous in itself, and useful or necessary to the welfare of the sugar-colonies.

1664. { Royal charters of	1712. The Queen's Speech,
1672. { C. II. to the A-	in which Her Majesty notices
	the Asiento Contract.
9 and 10 W. III. cap. 26.	23 Geo. II. cap. 31.
10 Anne, cap. 27.	25 Geo. II. cap. 40.
1707, 1713. Various resolutions of the House of Commons.	4 Geo. III. cap. 20.
	5 Geo. III. cap. 44.
	23 Geo. III. cap. 65.
1711. The Queen's Message to the Commons.	

3dly. Acts which secure and promote loans of money to the proprietors in the West-India colonies, whether from British subjects or foreigners, as instrumental to their cultivation, and thereby to the public benefit.

5 Geo. II. cap. 7.	14 Geo. III. cap. 39.
13 Geo. III. cap. 14.	

justified by all the wisdom of the legislature of this country for a century past, though I do not wish to argue down the sagacity of modern times, when compared with that of our forefathers, yet I do contend, that, when it is proposed to strike down and destroy, by one act of parliament, all that our predecessors have done in a long series of years, we should pause and consider, before we precipitate a measure, which, in the pursuit of universal right, may be fraught with municipal injustice.

Another Honourable Gentleman* has declared, that the House is, by its resolutions, bound to support this Bill; for that, having entertained the Bill in its first stages, we are required, for the sake of consistency, to give it our final assent. This argument sounds strangely in the mouths of those who contend, that the repeated decisions of parliament, in support of this Trade for a century past, should have no weight whatever in its favour on this occasion.

* Mr. M. Montague.

Sir,

Sir, an Honourable Baronet* has been answered with a degree of levity, which does not become the importance of the subject,† when, in stating that a considerable part of West-India property was vested in British subjects, he observed, that, the planters were bound, upon this occasion, to urge the claims of their creditors, who would otherwise eventually suffer by the very encouragement and invitation which had been held out to them by the parliament of Great-Britain. Sir, the value of West-India property is not less than seventy or eighty millions; and of that sum, I am assured, that more than twenty millions are

* Sir William Young, answered by Mr. Francis.

† One is at a loss to conceive the drift of the observation which Mr. Dundas here deigns to notice. *Seriously* to maintain, that, because an estate has been mortgaged for a considerable part of its value, the proprietor is not by interest or duty pledged to its protection, would imply a degree of absurdity irreconcilable with the acknowledged abilities of Mr. Francis; and yet *sarcastically* to reproach the planters with the amount of their burthens, in the very instant of urging a measure calculated to prevent their alleviation, would indicate a poverty of imagination and illiberality of mind, of which one would not willingly accuse that Honourable Gentleman.

British property, advanced and invested for the support and culture of the colonies. This money has been lent on the faith of parliament, repeatedly and solemnly pledged. The West-India planters, therefore, are surely justified in consulting, not only the preservation of their own property and that of their children, but also in bringing forward, and urging, on this occasion, the claims of their creditors. I say, Sir, that they have a fair and undoubted right to state, that their creditors will be injured, if this Bill passes into a law;—nay, they are bound, by a moral obligation, to do so. And are not we too, Sir, bound by a moral obligation, equally strong, to consider and support those claims which have been incurred by the solemn acts of our ancestors? We may distinguish between *our* acts and the acts of former parliaments; but I contend, that we have one continued legislation, and that the act of one hundred and fifty years ago is the act of this day. If, therefore, we are to impose hardships upon any of our fellow-subjects, it is our duty to inquire into them, and not idly reject the interests of those, who are entitled to our immediate protection, *upon any plea whatever*. In the consideration of this part of the subject, the provision for
 infant-

infant-children is involved, and this House is the guarantee of trustees, guardians, and executors. Is it not our duty to take care that the just claims of orphans and widows be not overlooked, even in the general zeal for a good cause? I must here advert to a topic, which I have before-mentioned. Feeling that the co-operation of the planters is essential to the success of every measure for abolishing the Slave-Trade, I wish to call the attention of the House to the means of obtaining that necessary co-operation. It is my sincere desire, that the legislature of this country should act upon the broad basis of humanity, justice, and policy, and that we should give clear and signal proofs to the planters, that their local and particular interests have been attended to. The consideration that this has *not* been done forms a radical objection to the present Bill. This, Sir, is no new doctrine; it is but a repetition of what I urged four years ago, with all the force and persuasion I was master of. I then stated that a gradual abolition was the only mode which would be effectual, and I brought forward a clause for the institution of a commission, with the view, that, in the pursuit of general justice, the sufferings of individuals might not escape our attention. I, therefore,

therefore, do not now, by stating the propriety of a commission, propose a new measure; but I am re-stating that which I recommended four years ago, namely, a provision for making inquiry into the losses that will be sustained by individuals, if the measure of abolition takes effect. And I say, that this Bill, going out to the West-Indies, without any provision of that kind, may be attended with dangerous consequences. If the planters are heated, —if their minds are enflamed, —Gentlemen should recollect the provocations they have met with. Their property has been attacked, and their characters aspersed. If this Bill, therefore, be sent out to men, whose minds are already but too much and too justly agitated; who are taught, by sad experience, that no attention has been paid to their complaints, or to their feelings; what, Sir, may not be expected? I wish the legislature of this country would take care, —and, I trust, the wisdom of this House will take care, —before they send out an act like this, to do execution on the colonies, that it be, at least, accompanied with some measure of compromise, —something like an indication of parental superintendence and regard, to reconcile them to the measure. By this I mean the appointment

ment of commissioners, authorized to inquire into the extent of injuries and losses which persons may sustain in consequence of the act, that parliament may be enabled to give them an adequate indemnification, pursuant to the report of its commissioners; who should also be empowered to investigate the probable effects of this measure upon the property of the creditors in the parent-country, which is vested on the security of West-India estates.

Consider, Sir, for a moment, what would otherwise be the consequence of an immediate abolition. I am ready to pay every deference and submission to the talents and wisdom of those who support this Bill; but I cannot shut out the light of my own understanding — that which God has given me, I must exercise. And, Sir, knowing and feeling, as every man must know and feel, that, if there be trustees to any West-India property, — if there be guardians of the affairs of infants, — those trustees and guardians will think it their duty to look very attentively to the preservation of the trusts committed to their care; I contend, that there is not one individual among them, who will suffer the property of his ward to continue under any speculative or uncertain contingency,

tingency, or to be subjected to any possible risk which he can avert; and, do you think, then, that all outstanding monies can be suddenly called in without injury? Do you mean, that all mortgages are to be immediately foreclosed? Shall the planters be compelled to sell all their negroes (the only means and support of their cultivation) for the payment of their creditors? Do you intend, that all these proceedings shall follow, (for they will be the necessary effect of this Bill, if it passes into a law,) without taking one step, directly or indirectly, to obviate or prevent them? We know that our courts of equity have interfered to prevent the foreclosure of a mortgage where even one individual was concerned, and shall not parliament interfere to stop a general foreclosure, which must involve the interests of thousands? Is this the only case where justice is to sleep? I know, Sir, that most part of West-India property rests upon credit, and that, separated from credit, it is nothing. It will be found, on inquiry, that many of the planters, who have borrowed money in this country for the purchase of negroes, and the cultivation of their plantations, are under an obligation to send annually to their mortgagees a certain quantity of consignments. And if they

they be rendered unable to complete those engagements, what will be the event? This is a case which those acquainted with the commerce of the islands know to be very common.

There are, Sir, many other cases that might be stated with equal propriety and force, but I do not wish to engage the attention of the House too long. Some of the settlers in the ceded islands were bound, by express conditions, in the grants of their lands, to place and maintain upon their estates a certain number of negroes; and when the island of Tobago was taken by the French, the property of many of the planters was confiscated, because the number of slaves, which they were bound to maintain by their original grants, was not found upon it.

Sir, I come now to consider the resolution entered into by this House four years ago, "That, on the first of January, 1796, the African Slave-Trade should cease and determine." I was the person who brought forward the measure of gradual abolition. I then thought, and I am still of opinion, that many intermediate steps were necessary for effecting

effecting that purpose; but I found my projects opposed, and I abandoned them for a while. The resolution, however, of the House of Commons went to another House of Parliament, and there it has remained from that day to this, without any proceedings being had thereon, except an examination of witnesses. By that resolution, it was certainly intended, that the planters should stock their plantations with a sufficient number of negroes during the next ensuing four years, to prevent the necessity of farther importations afterwards. But is it to be argued, and can it be maintained, that the importation for the last four years affords even a compensation for the losses which have been sustained in that time by the war? Have the times been such as to give the planters a fair and equitable opportunity of supplying the deficiencies in their stock? If any Gentleman maintains, that we are bound, in consequence of that resolution, to come now to an immediate abolition, I will tell him, that he wishes us to act in conformity to the *letter*, but, at the same time, in direct opposition to the *spirit*, of that resolution. Let me explain, Sir, how the purposes of that resolution have been frustrated, and how those islands, which more particularly wanted a supply

ply of negroes, have been least able to obtain it. It was stated four years ago, that, Jamaica, Barbadoes, Antigua, and all the other islands, which had been for a long time in our possession, had nearly a sufficient stock of negroes, but that the newly-ceded islands, Grenada, St. Vincent, and Dominica, were greatly deficient; and the delay of four years was thought necessary, in order to bring these to any degree of parity with the old islands. I therefore ask Gentlemen, whether these new islands have reaped the benefits of this temporary suspension of the abolition? I wish them to tell me, what opportunities they have had of completing their stock of negroes as proposed by the resolution? A great part of Grenada and St. Vincent has been laid waste, and the island of Dominica, for a considerable period, has been in a state of rebellion. Many of their slaves in the mean time have been enlisted in our armies, for the purpose of more effectually protecting the properties of the planters from the diabolical attempts of the French. I am speaking, Sir, on the authority of this House, which, upon a representation of the planters' sufferings last year, found it expedient and necessary to give them a large credit, a loan to the amount of one million and

and a half in Exchequer-Bills. Is this loan to be converted into a gift? Do we mean to give the planters these Exchequer-Bills as an indemnity for the devastations which have been committed in the islands? Such, certainly, must be our intention, if we deprive them of the power of repaying us. We may say to them, " We have given you an indulgence of four years to stock yourself with negroes before the abolition of the Trade." But what will be their answer? " We have been in a state of war and devastation, — many of us without houses, without plantations, without negroes, without the means of repairing our losses, much less of supplying the deficiencies of our stock, nor could we possibly have derived any benefit from the delay." I wish, Sir, to bring this forward, as a strong claim. I trust the minds of Gentlemen will dwell upon it; and, I repeat, that this Bill, sent out to the colonies, unaccompanied with any one circumstance of parental solicitude or conciliation, will be a more aggravated injury than any you have yet done to them.

These, Sir, are the grounds upon which I contend, that this Bill is inadequate to its object, incompetent to the purposes for which it

is peculiarly designed;—impracticable in its execution, and that the attempt to enforce it will endanger the interests not only of the colonies, but of the mother-country. The subject of this night's discussion is of vast importance, and, as it is understood that this is the last opportunity I shall have of urging my objections against the Bill, let me observe once for all, that, whatever the ultimate effect of this measure may be, the world will do me the justice to say, that, to the utmost of my power, I have endeavoured to forewarn this House, I have endeavoured to guard my country against its consequences!

Something fell from a Right Honourable Gentleman* in the course of a former debate, which, if I thought that no one but myself had heard, I should not now deem it my duty to notice; although I have also heard something of the same kind suggested this night by an Honourable Gentleman opposite to me.† The last Gentleman doubted, whether the loss of the sugar-colonies would be injurious to the mother-country; and he attempted to il-

* Mr. Fox.

† Mr. Francis.

illustrate his reasoning by the case of North America, whose separation from the parent-state he seemed to consider rather as beneficial than injurious to Great-Britain. This, Sir, I consider as a rash and inconsiderate position. The expression of the Right Honourable Gentleman, on a former night, involved the same idea. He recommended, that, if the colonies did not consent to the abolition of the Slave-Trade, we should "menace them with independence." This expression derives a weight from the superiority of that Right Honourable Gentleman's talents, which it would not otherwise possess. The Right Honourable Gentleman might possibly have modified the phrase, by the context of his speech; but when sent round the town in different channels, unconnected and unqualified, it may become of very dangerous influence. I should not, Sir, have taken this matter up in so serious a point of view, but that I have since heard persons out of this House gravely maintain the same doctrine which has been advanced by the Honourable Gentleman* this night, namely, "that the interest of this country is not much involved in the con-

* Mr. Francis.

"nexion

“ nexion with its colonies in the West-Indies.”

However I might have wished that no such observation had been made, yet I think, that, since it has been once mentioned, it deserves a serious refutation. Dangerous positions, once advanced, are the worse for not being noticed. When we reason upon them, the doctrine and the reasoning go together. Both sides are then on equal grounds; but when assertions of such importance are suffered to pass undisputed, they appear as if they were established and acknowledged apothegms. I entreat, therefore, that the House will, for a single moment, listen to a few *data* which I am about to state, from a paper in my hand, and which, in my opinion, will place this question out of the reach of controversy. These *data* relate to the exports and imports between Great-Britain and her West-India colonies. And, first, with regard to the import-trade;—The article of the imports from the West-Indies, for the year 1795, amounts to £8,881,673. This, Gentlemen will perceive, is something more than speculation. The revenue, arising from these imports, amounts to the sum of £1,624,176, after subtracting all drawbacks. I mean, Sir, by that, the nett revenue. The number of ships

employed in this import-trade amounted that year to 634 vessels, containing 153,000 tons, and navigated by about 8,000 seamen. If there be, Sir, any thing more important than this statement, it is the other side of the account.

The exports to the West-India islands of foreign manufactures, amounted to	£ 531,000
Of British manufactures	£ 3,212,431

Making together in British and foreign manufactures, the sum of £ 3,743,431

These exports, Sir, have freighted 700 vessels of the burthen of 177,000 tons, and given employment to 12,000 seamen. There is another matter which I beg leave to state to the House, I mean the quantity of West-India produce first imported into this country and afterwards exported. This amounts, for a part of the year only, to the sum of £ 3,773,000. This, Sir, is a plain statement, nor do I include in the account the navigation between America and the West-Indies. This calculation comprehends merely the amount of the Trade between this country and its colonial possessions in the West-Indies.

If

If any person shall tell me, that some of these advantages would be enjoyed by us even if the West-Indies stood in the same relation to this country as America stands at this moment, I shall readily admit, that as much of this account as arises out of the exportation and sale of our manufactures might possibly be the same in case of a separation. I do not think the manufacturers of America are yet, nor indeed likely to be for a great many years, in a state to rival the manufacturers of Great-Britain. But when I have admitted thus much, it must, on the other hand, be allowed, that such an event, besides the operation it would have on the navigation of this kingdom, would put out of our power the whole produce that comes from the West-Indies, and for which the planters can easily find a market elsewhere. Such a consequence would inevitably follow, and does it not form a most important consideration? We should lose all the surplus which makes so great an article in the foreign trade of this country. The whole of that important advantage would, by such an event, be lost for ever. Such would be one of the consequences of West-India independance, and such, as I have stated, is

de facto the relative situation existing between the mother-country and her sugar-colonies.

Is it then, Sir, a crime in any Member of this House in this case to talk of policy? Is this the only question from which all considerations of policy are to be excluded? Is it a crime in me to call on Gentlemen, who, past the levity of youth, have arrived at a more sober and deliberate mode of thinking, maturely to weigh the consequences of rash and intemperate councils on this occasion. Shall it be said, that I do not consult the interests of humanity, because I, who have attained a more advanced period of life, do not rush precipitately on, without clearly seeing my way before me?

This leads me, Sir, to another consideration, which I wish to press upon the attention of the House, — and this consideration relates to America. Gentlemen should recollect, that the independance of America is already established. The separation of the West-India islands from the mother-country is, therefore, at this time, a very different question from what it would have been, if the connexion between Great-Britain and America had still subsisted;

subsisted; — before Gentlemen permit themselves to think such an event possible, before they revolve in a fit of generosity, or in a moment of anger, to declare the West-India colonies independant, I wish they would at least consider, what security there is, that those islands would continue in that state of independance in which we might place them, if they were absolved from their allegiance and dismissed from the patronage of this country? I would ask, whether there is no other power in the world to be found, who would stretch out a fatherly hand for their protection? If, by the egregious folly and the madness of this country, such an event should occur, if any unjust and intemperate decision of this House should unfortunately produce the independance of the sugar-colonies, it is but too probable, that, with exultation over our folly, some other nation would read such a paper as I have this day produced, to demonstrate to the world the consequences of our insanity, by displaying the extent of *our* losses, and the magnitude of *their* gains! I feel myself impelled, by the importance of the subject, to press this again and again upon the minds of the House, and to inform them how greatly they are mistaken, if they think they are consulting the true inte-

rests of this country in giving the smallest encouragement to the most distant idea of West-Indian independancy!*

Sir,

* Ably as the foregoing considerations have been urged by the Right Honourable speaker, it may be useful to suggest some views of the subject which he has omitted, —and,

First, It is a conclusion not logically just, that, because the commerce of Great-Britain has been prosperous and progressive since the separation of the North-American colonies, it is, therefore, indebted to that separation for any part of its prosperity, and might not have arrived to a much higher pitch if such an event had not happened. Do the American States use none but British manufactures, employ none but British agents, enrich none but British capitalists? Are they not become formidable rivals to us in commercial navigation, and has not France, in the present war, found in their neutrality a powerful resource? Their advance in population and wealth, for several years immediately preceding the revolution, was so obvious and rapid, that, considering the drains and burthens which the war imposed, it would be too much to say, that their independance has given a peculiar spur to their advancement, from which Britain, as a trading nation, has derived a compensation for her loss of their exclusive trade. Could any probable expense of their protection have nearly reached the amount of that debt incurred in the war by which they were lost? The arguments by which free trade is usually recommended do not apply to this case. Such arguments imply a general liberation, but here there was no *quid pro quo*. Something, doubtless, was conceded, and nothing obtained in return.

Secondly,

Sir, I am far from desiring the Honourable Gentleman* to relinquish his design for the future

Secondly, Whatever may be determined respecting the advantages which Great-Britain derived from her North-American colonies, no fair conclusion can thence be drawn as to the value of those she possesses in the West-Indies, in so many and such material points dissimilar in nature and situation. So early as the time of Sir Josiah Child, who wrote in 1660, while the colonies of both kinds were yet in their infancy, this distinction was marked; their relative fitness for raising rival manufactures, building rival shipping, and draining the mother-country of people, are by him stated in plain, but forcible, terms. (See Child on Trade, cap. 10.) It should never be forgotten, that the cultivation of the West-India islands is entirely devoted to objects which the mother-country cannot produce, yet cannot do without, and which, from their extensive consumption, afford the surest means of balancing her foreign trade;—those colonies possess no exclusive shipping, and their acquirements centre, not by indirect channels, but immediately in the bosom of Great-Britain. Political economists may theorize concerning the utility of colonies, and the preference of concentrating the national industry and wealth, but they forget that such establishments are inseparable from the genius of a maritime people, and essential to its prosperity. And, if the comparative merit of colonies be examined, we may safely assert, that none ever existed so reconcileable with the best principles of political economy as those which the European nations possess in the West-Indies.

Thirdly,

* Mr. Wilberforce.

future and final abolition of the African Slave-Trade. It is a glorious, a god-like enterprize, worthy

Thirdly, The *independancy* of the West-India islands, all things considered, is not a subject of probable speculation; they are constituted for an interchange of exclusive benefits, like that in which they now exist, and have hitherto flourished; and Great-Britain would impose a task upon herself greater than any she ever undertook, were she to attempt to counteract their natural bias in that respect. Now, if any of our political economists should be disposed to maintain, that, in a state of dependance upon some other nation, Great-Britain might derive advantages from their commerce, let him be asked, what benefits did she derive from the trade of Martinique and St. Domingo ten years ago? Those which France enjoyed from her exclusive colonies are stated very clearly in the valuable Analysis of the French Commerce, published about the time of the revolution, by M. Arnould. It is there shewn that France imported from her colonies a value of about eight millions sterling, of which she exported about six millions, by that, and by that alone, turning the general balance of trade in her favour. After accounting for the rapid progress which the commerce of Europe has made in the eighteenth century, that intelligent writer concludes:—

“ Toutes ces circonstances réunies ont produit la plus grande
 “ activité et une forte émulation dans le commerce des Euro-
 “ péens. Elles ont multiplié les consommations, et ce mouve-
 “ ment producteur a *particulièrement été favorable à la France*,
 “ devenue, vers le commencement du siècle, *propriétaire*
 “ d’objets nouveaux de consommation. Avec le secours des
 “ *dénrées de nos Isles d’Amérique*, la France a fondé une
 “ *marine coloniale importante*; elle a fait ainsi valoir les
 “ marchandises navales du Nord, pendant que les capitalistes,

“ les

worthy his talents, and worthy the goodness of his heart. I love the Honourable Gentleman, Sir, and I love many of those by whom he is supported. But, although I acknowledge the purity of their motives, although I am convinced that they are actuated by the most virtuous impulse, I must, however reluctantly, oppose them, when they hurry on a measure like the present, without that due consideration and reflection which its importance demands. I must, from a strong sense of duty to my country, differ from them, because the plan, which they propose for relieving the oppressed Africans, is unattended with any regard for those interests which we are bound to preserve. It is because I love and venerate them, that I feel so strong a concern for the consequences of their measures.

I must now, Sir, once more, allude to the vote which passed this House, four years ago

“ les armateurs, et les négocians François, en s'enrichissant
 “ par le commerce, comme les agens du gouvernement, par
 “ la part qu'ils obtenoient dans la progression des impôts
 “ sur les consommations, se sont livrés à un luxe qui a aug-
 “ menté le débouché des produits du sol et de l'industrie
 “ des Contrées Méridionales de l'Europe.”

Arnould, Balance de la Commerce, p. 268.

for

for the abolition of this trade: I was of opinion, at that time, that the indulgence of four years would be of no service to the colonies. I was of opinion, that, although cargoes of slaves, promiscuously collected of old and young, might bring profit to Bristol and Liverpool, they could not be advantageous to your colonies. I stated, at that time, that, however beneficial the proposed indulgence, in point of time, might prove to the merchants there, and to jobbers in the West-Indies, it could not produce any permanent utility to the planters themselves. For, Sir, it was impossible for me, not to know from all the histories I had read, and information I had acquired on the subject, that the sudden influx of great numbers of aged negroes into the colonies would endanger their safety. I maintained, upon general principles of theory, that aged negroes, after they had imbibed all the habits of savage life, without possessing one moral or one religious principle, derived from precept or example, and who, when sold to slavery, must nourish all the deep resentments of a revengeful mind; I maintained, that such people were not likely to become profitable servants or willing labourers in the West-Indies. I apprehended that very serious consequences might

might arise from crowding the islands with fresh importations of those negroes, a circumstance which the resolution of this House directly tended to create. I stated all this upon theory, and it is now established beyond theory. It is impossible to look to great tracts of land in the West-Indies, laid desolate by the most unprovoked devastation, it is impossible to look to some of the islands, ravaged with more desperate fury, with more savage barbarity, than have ever yet stained the page of history, by immense numbers of liberated negroes, led on by the cruel policy of an inveterate enemy, without being convinced, that the fears which I then described as probable are realized; and that the theory is confirmed by melancholy fact and woeful experience. France, Sir, not daring to meet us openly, by the courage and enterprize of her fleets and armies, has adopted a base and detestable mode of warfare. In the dead hour of the night, she pours into our islands all the refuse of her own slaves, set free for the purpose of stimulating and inspiriting our own negroes to outrage and rebellion: raising the hand of the servant against the master, instilling the principles of treachery and ingratitude, for the purpose of destroying the lives and

and properties of all. If this picture be just, and if it be true, that the islands will always be endangered by the importation of aged negroes, I am confirmed in the opinion, that it becomes the wisdom of this House to put a stop to such importations; and there is but one way, in my opinion, of accomplishing it, and that is by limiting the number of negroes, to be imported hereafter, to those of a certain age. I do believe that such a measure would be effectual: that to confine the future importations to negroes, not exceeding twenty or thirty years of age, would not only be serviceable to the peace of the islands, but, at the same time, would operate in producing a gradual abolition of the slave-trade altogether. We should, by these means, give to the planters the power of quickly putting themselves into the situation of establishing a permanent population, which would supersede the necessity of farther supplies from Africa.

Sir, I believe, had these regulations been adopted and enforced seven years ago, that this desirable object must, at this time, have been very nearly accomplished. I press this, not only from my own opinion, but from the information of others. One immediate effect
would

would necessarily follow; a smaller number of slaves would be imported on the whole, and therefore the views of those Gentlemen, who brought in the present Bill, would so far be answered.

A Noble Lord, in my eye, told me, I don't know whether privately or publicly, that such a plan was impracticable, and that it would no more meet the consent of the planters than the present Bill. Such objections, I am convinced, are fallacious. But I can have recourse to better authority than my own, to prove that the measure is not impracticable, and that I have reason to believe the planters will not object to it. In the year 1774, two different Acts were passed by the House of Assembly of the island of Jamaica: the one in February, 1774, by which a duty of forty shillings, in addition to the former duties, was laid upon every negro imported into that island. This not being sufficient to check the increasing importation, the colony took the alarm at too large an influx of aged negroes, and the Assembly, in the month of November in the same year, passed another law, imposing an additional tax of seven pounds more upon every negro imported, who should have passed
his

his thirtieth year. This Act, Sir, coming home for the royal confirmation, was petitioned against by the merchants of Liverpool and Bristol; and, a reference being had to the board of trade, the Board reported against the measure, on the ground that the Colonial Assembly had exceeded their constitutional functions in taxing the trade of Great-Britain. The agents for the West-India islands were Mr. Bryan Edwards and Mr. Stephen Fuller. They were opposed by Sir William Meredith and Mr. Edmund Burke, the Members for Liverpool and Bristol. His Majesty in Council rejected the Act, in consequence of the report of the board of trade, although the agent of Jamaica presented a remonstrance against the report, stating that “ the large duties laid
 “ upon imported negroes, above thirty years
 “ of age, by the Act of November, were laid
 “ by the House of Assembly, not for the purpose of raising a revenue upon the trade of
 “ Great-Britain, but solely *on the principle of*
 “ *self-preservation, and to put an end to that enormous*
 “ *importation, particularly of old negroes,*
 “ *which, at that time, endangered the existence of*
 “ *the colonies.*”

Taking

Taking it then, Sir, as a fact established beyond the reach of controversy, by the first authority upon earth, I mean the authority of men upon the spot, whose interests, nay, whose existence are concerned ; — taking it, I repeat, for granted, that the proposition which I have mentioned would be serviceable and practicable ; considering withal, that every importation of aged negroes is attended with danger, I cannot but think it incumbent on the House, rather to adopt such a measure, than the present Bill.

Sir, I am in the recollection of the House, whether the resolution which I formerly proposed was a limitation of time only, I stated distinctly, that the chief object of my plan was the limiting the ages of the negroes ; but, whatever suggestions and arguments were at that time urged, the authority which I have cited is infinitely stronger than any argument whatever ; and it was with the view of placing my plan upon a solid and immoveable foundation, that I referred to it. I have heard, as an objection, that it would be impossible to ascertain the ages of the imported negroes. To this objection I have to observe, that the

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Act

Act of the Jamaica Assembly named *Inspectors* in the different parts, to examine whether the negroes imported were under thirty years or not, and to regulate the tax accordingly; these inspectors were, during all their lives, in the constant habit of seeing negroes of all ages; but, although there should be a difficulty almost insurmountable in distinguishing, to any degree of certainty, the ages under thirty, it could not form an objection to the plan which I would propose, namely, that the limited age should not exceed twenty years, instead of thirty; I say, Sir, it would be infinitely more easy to distinguish within a year or two of twenty than of thirty. This limitation would gradually furnish a stock sufficient to prevent any necessity of farther importation, and it would instantly remove many of the objections to the trade, and immediately, by its operation, lessen the traffic in a considerable degree; for which reason I should not think it necessary to limit the number of negroes imported, but confine the limitation to, the ages only.

I hope I shall not be told, that my plan will be thrown aside, under any idea of farther importation being unnecessary. I know, Sir, that, in the whole of this controversy, no
question

question has been more warmly disputed, than whether the islands could, or could not, subsist without new importations; I know also, that many well-informed persons have argued that they could; but however this may be, there is one fact in which all parties are agreed. The fact to which I refer is, that there actually exists in the islands, at this time, a much greater number of males than of females. This disparity in the sexes operates against the first principle by which the human race is supported. Gentlemen may object, that this inequality has been supplied in the course of these last four years: perhaps in some degree it has, but I am positive in asserting, that the number of female negroes in the colonies is, at present, incomplete for a permanent population. Assured as I am of that fact, I contend, that, if this Bill should pass, it will not abolish the trade, and I maintain, that if, by a high hand of authority and contempt of their interests, you try to deprive the islands of the means of supplying what they conceive to be essentially necessary to their permanent subsistence, they will, in despair, be driven to continue this traffic in the very way, which, of all others, you would wish them to avoid.

Sir, I repeat, that if, in preference to such a measure as I propose, the Parliament of Great Britain shall send out this Bill to the colonies, unattended with a commission, to inquire into the losses of individuals, unattended with any one circumstance of conciliation and compromise, whilst the minds of the planters are inflamed by the destruction of their properties and the aspersion of their characters, let the consequence be what it may, I shall, at least, have the solid satisfaction of reflecting, that I have contributed all in my power to prevent it. What, Sir, will you, whilst you injure their properties, continue to enforce heavy quit-rents? Will you not take into your consideration the expenses which they have been at, in building houses and erecting works, for the cultivation and improvement of waste lands? Or must the buildings lie useless, and the proprietors receive neither equivalent nor compensation? Can you expect, in such case, to meet that which you have in no instance invited, the cordial co-operation of the colonies? Do you think that they will allow a Bill of this kind to pass without the most determined opposition?

Such,

Such, Sir, are the grounds upon which I have felt it my bounden duty to oppose this Bill. I do it emphatically, I do it earnestly: if any man shall say, that I am less actuated by the feelings of humanity than himself, I shall leave him to the enjoyment of that opinion. I do not wish to disturb his consciousness of rectitude, I must apply, for a refutation of his charges, to those who have known me in all the stages of my life, from infancy to manhood, and from manhood to this day. I shall only observe, that it is not by making eloquent harangues in this House, with humanity in our mouths, that we can convince the minds of sober and rational men of the rectitude and soundness of our principles, and I shall treat such aspersions with the silent contempt which becomes one, who is conscious to himself, that he possesses the proper feelings of a man, as implanted by nature, and improved by education.

I have, Sir, endeavoured to state my observations upon this subject with precision, I have also stated them at considerable length; let me hope, that they have been distinctly understood. I can only add, that I have not, intentionally, offended any gentleman; for, however
much

much I am of opinion, that the promoters of this Bill are frustrating their own object, I beg them to believe, that I entertain the strongest affection for their persons, the utmost veneration for their motives, and the most perfect regard for the well-regulated conduct of their lives and actions.

THE END.